(c) whether this fund would be operated by the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers; and

(d) if so, to what extent it would be helpful?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Planning Commission has made a provision of Rs. 150 crore under Department of Science and Technology in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002—07) for establishing Pharmaceuticals Research and Development Support Fund (PRDSF) for promotion of R&D for drug industry. Government have decided that the said fund shall be operated by the Department of Science and Technology for the aforementioned purpose. Necessary follow-up action has been initiated by the Department to make the Fund operational.

Exposure to mercury poisoning in India

3257. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Centre for Science and Environment has undertaken a green rating project and found India being exposed to high levels of mercury poisoning, due to the companies producing caustic soda and chlorine, as reported in the Times of India of 3rd September, 2002, under the caption, Green rating sounds mercury alert; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and the preventive steps proposed to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Decline in science students

†3258. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a considerable decline in number of Science students during the last few years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.